



Ann Arbor Public Schools

Superintendent Update

Board of Education

October 18, 2023

As we cross mid-October of this 2023-2024 school year, we are grateful to see students, teachers, staff and families fully engaged in all the school activities of this fall season; we appreciate all the hard work of our school teams who work hard to serve our students each day.

October: National Principals Month Appreciation in the AAPS

School leadership matters. An effective school leader makes a tremendous difference in serving and supporting the school team, ensuring quality educational experiences for our students across our AAPS schools. Each day, our AAPS Principals embody the statement, “Leadership is service, not position,” shared by author Tim Fargo.

In supporting, connecting and empowering students, staff and families within and across the school community, mobilizing a team to remove barriers and ensuring a culture of dignity, belonging and well-being, the school principal is key in the daily life and progress of responsive, caring school communities.

Principals, thank you for your strong commitment and your unfaltering work. In recognition of National Principals Month, we extend a special note of gratitude for your dedication and service to our students and their families, staff members and our community.

We come together this month to celebrate you, our champions in education and leadership and recognize the positive and profound difference you continue to make in the lives of all those you serve each day.

Thank you, AAPS School Principals!

You may read the full AAPS Principals Month statement [here](#).

AAPS Exceptional Teacher

You may have noticed the recent AAPS News profile highlighting the career of **Ashley Vasiloff, 5th-grade teacher at Lakewood Elementary**, who was born in Allendale, Michigan. Ashley received a bachelor’s degree from Aquinas College in Grand Rapids with a major in language

arts and a minor in early childhood education. She then earned her master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction/ Teacher Leadership from Dordt College in Iowa.

This is Ms. Vasiloff's third year at Lakewood and her 15th year in teaching. Throughout her career, Vasiloff has taught kindergarten, 1st-grade, 5th-grade and 6th, 7th and 8th-grade language arts.

Lakewood Principal Ainess Stewart says that Vasiloff works hard to meet the needs of each and every student, every day, and admires the way she has incorporated sign language into her morning meeting routine.

We value and appreciate the contributions of Ms. Vasiloff and all members of our Team AAPS, who work and invest their talents and lives each day in service to our students. Thanks to Jo Mathis, who writes the Exceptional Teacher profile pieces.

Planetarium Update

From the Teaching and Learning division, we want to share an update on the work around the programming of our AAPS Planetarium located at Pioneer. We are entering the 3rd year of a successful partnership with the University of Michigan to prepare content and deliver planetarium immersive presentations and learning experiences for our elementary students.

We are thrilled to share that we will be expanding with an opportunity for our 8th graders to visit the UofM Natural History Museum and will also be working to extend planetarium experience opportunities for our high school earth science and astronomy students soon.

Special Education Update

In the prior September superintendent update, we shared news about the first cohort of the EMU Paraeducator Teacher Certification program, and today we want to share an update on Cohort #2 who will be student teaching in Spring 2024; currently, members of our Special Education team are seeking placements for these four pending student teachers.

You may recall that this group is the second of five cohorts of AAPS paraeducators who have stepped up to complete their undergraduate degree, and to earn their professional certification as teachers. This cohort group will be certificated with the Specific Learning Disability endorsement and, on successful completion of the program this year, will be fully certificated as teachers in June 2024.

We are grateful for funding through grants that we have been awarded in order to enable the development of this exciting program to fill the critical need to prepare Special Education teachers.

Elementary, Middle & High School

Elementary parent-teacher conferences will take place during the month of October and through early November, and schools will send home Term 1 report cards just before the Thanksgiving break.

Huron, Skyline and Pioneer will begin surveying students and staff for the Equal Opportunity Schools (EOS) on October 23, 2023. The purpose is to identify capable students who could be successful in AP courses that may not have been previously identified, and this is a fundamental equity strategy we have used for several years to increase the enrollment of traditionally underrepresented students in higher-level coursework, including AP and IB.

Huron High School is Hosting “Building Bridges,” a College and Transition Fair on Thursday, October 26th, from 6-7:30.

Our middle-level and K8 students are participating in the NWEA assessment during the month of October, and parent-teacher conferences continue through early November. Students and parents should be aware that grades for the first quarter will be posted on November 3rd.

AAPS Food & Nutrition Services

In AAPS food and nutrition news, Apple Crunch Day was recently celebrated across the district. A regional apple farmer attended many schools to share his apples with students. Here are a few photos.



We are sad to share that Victoria Davis, manager of the AAPS Chartwells program over previous years, has resigned from her position. We will miss Victoria, who provided exceptional service to our district; one highlight is her leadership in implementing the meal distribution plan during the pandemic when she mobilized the effort to serve more than a million meals during the COVID food distribution effort. She worked alongside the team to keep our students provided with daily and weekend food during a very challenging time, she has also improved service delivery and introduced fresh-cooked food items to the district menu. We deeply appreciate Victoria’s service over the previous years and wish her well in her next steps.

Mike Devries, who has been serving as the assistant director, has stepped in to serve as Interim Director. Mike is very responsive and has been doing a great job under Victoria’s leadership.

Ms. Minnick and Ms. Margolis have met with the Chartwells regional director and members of the team to confirm the details of a strong leadership transition plan.

We are confident that Mike will do a great job moving forward for the AAPS.

Human Resources

The HR team is finalizing the fall recruiting schedule, including upcoming job fairs at:

- Wayne State University
 - Wednesday, October 11, 2023 (12 PM - 5 PM)
 - Thursday, October 12, 2023 (12 PM - 5 PM)
(All positions)
- Washtenaw Community College
 - Thursday, October 12, 2023 (4 PM - 6 PM)

We will continue to update these job fairs as the Human Resources team continues their efforts to acquire talent in the AAPS.

Strategic Partnerships, Volunteers, and Community Resources

So far this fall, we have welcomed 144 Strategic Partnership Volunteers into 22 different schools.

Many volunteers are from courses, groups and programs at the University of Michigan and serve as inspiring role models for our students.

Volunteers provide a wide variety of supplemental support to teachers and students, including Math and Literacy Support Volunteers, Bilingual Volunteers, and more.

AAPS schools and teachers have the opportunity to apply for approximately \$30,000 in grants for literacy, music development, field trips and more. These grants are made possible through our partnership with the Ann Arbor Kiwanis Foundation, the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation and through generous donations to AAPS.

Information is available on [the AAPS Projects and Classroom Grants page](#).

Community Education and Recreation (Rec & Ed)

Fall youth and adult enrichment classes are in full swing. Registration for late fall classes is open now for early childhood, youth, and adults. Visit aarecedonline.com to learn more.

Now is the time to start thinking about youth indoor recreational sports! Registration for Youth Basketball, High School Basketball and Indoor Soccer begins Oct 30 through Nov 27.

Rec & Ed continues to interview and hire for before/after care positions.

Technology

The ITD team is beginning the FY23-24 E-Rate switching project in all school buildings. During the months of October and November, every building's main networking switch will be upgraded. Work occurs on 2nd shift (4:00PM-Midnight) on Thursday evenings

- Between 3 & 4 buildings are scheduled on one evening
- Tech services are down for about 1 to 1 ½ hours as the main building switch gets replaced and new device configurations installed in each building
- Buildings are communicated to the Monday before the Thursday work event
- Hotspots are available by request for the evening of the networking project to support any evening building events

We are working closely with Capital Projects/Instruction/ITD to ramp up three empty classrooms in the Mitchell Modular to emulate what the new Mitchell School build will look and feel like at the classroom Learning Studios approach. The team is planning for a soft launch in mid-November.

Last week ITD team members, Dr. Heather Kellstrom & Chad Bertelson were webinar panelists for a state-level Securly Webinar entitled, ***A Path to Safer Michigan Schools***. They shared how we utilize our safety & security ecosystem in partnership with our instructional digital tools to support student safety, keep staff informed on student issues, and ways we are creating well-being support for both staff and students.

On October 18th, Dr. Heather Kellstrom, Jimmie Mayhand and Mike Hogue will be attending Governor Whitmer's **Michigan Cyber Summit**. We are looking forward to connecting with experts in 'all areas of cybersecurity.' This also gives our team a chance to reflect on our current cybersecurity practices/protocols, workshop our AAPS cyber framework and make additional connections with other cyber peers across the state.

Capital Programs and Physical Properties

Ann Arbor Public Schools - **Phase 2 Bond Plan**

2023 Project Engagement Highlight

The team recently worked to engage students at Logan and Thurston using image-generating AI platforms to participate in an in-class review of 'If I Built a School', by Chris Van Dusen, with time set aside for students to reflect, participate in a communal poster on what an ideal school could contain. Over 40 students in grades 3 and higher participated at each school.

Communication from the AAPS

To stay up-to-date with daily updates and information on school and district activities, you may want to follow us on social media.

- Twitter [@A2Schools](#) and [@A2SchoolsSuper](#)
- On Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/AnnArborPublicSchools>
- Subscribe to our A2Schools podcast at: <https://a2schools.buzzsprout.com>
- AAPS YouTube channel at: <https://www.youtube.com/AnnArborPublicSchools>.

We also regularly share updates on the work of the Board of Education in the [BOE Update Newsletters](#)

Attached to the Super Update Agenda item this evening, we have also attached the **September AAPS Communications Report**, and thanks to our communications team for all the important work they do to share the stories of the AAPS.

In conclusion, I want to share a moment of fall joy with these beautiful apple trees close-up artworks created by 1st-grade artists in the talented Ms. Stepnick's classroom at King Elementary.



We are grateful for the partnership and support of all in our AAPS community in our work together to support our students, staff, schools and this beautiful Ann Arbor Public Schools community we all share.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve in the Ann Arbor Public Schools, and for the opportunity to share this Superintendent Update this evening.

Sincerely,

Jeanice Kerr Swift

Jeanice Kerr Swift
Superintendent of Schools
Ann Arbor Public Schools